

# What is stress?

- We all know what it's like to feel stressed, but it's not easy to pin down exactly what stress means. When we say things like "this is stressful" or "I'm stressed", we might be talking about:
- **Situations or events that put pressure on us** – for example, times where we have lots to do and think about, or don't have much control over what happens.
- **Our reaction to being placed under pressure** – the feelings we get when we have demands placed on us that we find difficult to cope with.

"It's overwhelming. Sometimes you can't see beyond the thick fog of stress."

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/what-is-stress/>

# Psychological trauma

- Psychological trauma is damage to a person's mind as a result of one or more events that cause overwhelming amounts of stress that exceed the person's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved, eventually leading to serious, long-term negative consequences. Trauma is not the same as mental distress. [Wikipedia](#)

# Signs of Stress in Adults and Teens

---

- Physical signs, such as:
  - Fatigue
  - Headaches
  - Digestive problems
  - Body aches
  - Dizziness
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Increased or decreased appetite
- Behavioral signs, such as:
  - Inattention to grooming, hygiene or personal care
  - Increased sleeping

- Inattention to grooming, hygiene or personal care
- Increased sleeping
- Increased isolation or withdrawal from others (e.g., staying in one's room all day)
- Engaging in self-destructive or risky behaviors
- Increased use of caffeine, nicotine, alcohol or drugs
- Mental signs, such as:
  - Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
  - Forgetfulness
  - Distortion of sense of time
  - Worrying
- Emotional signs, such as:
  - Irritability
  - Argumentativeness
  - Angry outbursts
  - Crying spells

## **Potential Impact of Social Distancing on Older Adults**

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be especially stressful for older adults and may contribute to increased feelings of loneliness<sup>4</sup>. The CDC has provided information on Stress and Coping during the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to CDC, symptoms of stress include:

Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones

Worsening of chronic health problems

Worsening of mental health conditions

Changes in appetite or sleeping, feelings of hopelessness, difficulty concentrating, these may also mimic symptoms of depression

Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs;

Anger, uncertainty, or frustration

Increased somatic complaints



# Sources of Stress During COVID-19

---

Sources of stress during an infectious disease outbreak include:

- Concerns about your health, as well as the health of others.
- Concerns about loss of employment and income.
- Concerns about putting yourself or others at risk through essential actions, such as going to the grocery store or caregiving.
- Concerns about scarcity or an inability to obtain essential items.
- Concerns brought on by the disruption of normal routines.
- Concerns about the effects of measures put in place to limit the spread of disease, such as social distancing and stay-at-home orders.
- Concerns about effects on our family and children.
- Concerns about an uncertain future.
- Vicarious or secondary stress (the mental and emotional stress we experience when exposed to the trauma, pain and fear others have endured).

# Sources of Stress During COVID-19 (continued)

---

Members of the essential workforce may also experience stress related to:

- Leaving their family members to go to work, and returning home.
- Working in challenging settings under challenging conditions.
- Witnessing the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak firsthand.
- Having to self-quarantine daily when returning home from work or from remote work assignments.



## 19

---

- You and your coworkers will be affected by COVID-19 and changes to your work.
- Sources of work-related stress during the COVID-19 outbreak include:
  - Concerns about the health of the business, potential closure of the business, or loss of employment.
  - Changes in your role or job duties.
  - Changes in your hours.
  - Changes in working conditions (e.g., the need to work from home or practice social distancing in the workplace, the need to work increased hours).
  - Less interaction with, and support from, coworkers.
  - Concerns about exposure to COVID-19 while at work.
  - Concerns about coworkers who have contracted COVID-19, including the possibility that they may not recover.



# Supporting Your Coworkers at Work

---

- Stay connected.
  - If you are working from home, find times to catch up via telephone, video chats or web conferencing.
    - Avoid talking about work.
    - Check in with your coworkers about the stress they are feeling.
    - Share how you are feeling.
  - If you are reporting to a workplace with social distancing measures in place, take short breaks to catch up with coworkers.
- Encourage your coworkers to get help and link them to resources if you see they are having difficulty coping. Signs of distress may include:
  - An inability to perform usual tasks.
  - Absenteeism.
  - Irritability.
  - Withdrawal.
  - Not eating or sleeping.
  - Increased use of alcohol or tobacco.